

I Am Among You a Servant

Luke 22:24-30

Adults guide children to a vision for their lives by asking: “What do you want to be when you grow up? This question can lead Christians to a vision for their lives and churches. What kind of Christian do you want to be? What kind of church do you want to be? Children may want to be someone heroic or famous, like a fireman or actor. Adults encourage the path to success and renown. Does any child raise their hand high to shout with excitement: “I want to be a servant!”

During the last Passover before Jesus was crucified, his disciples disputed who should rule with Jesus upon the thrones to his right and left. While they disputed greatness, Jesus prepared for the cross. Jesus corrected his disciples’ vision of God’s kingdom, stating their rule will not be like the powers of the world’s kingdoms. His disciples would receive seats of honor in God’s kingdom, but these thrones would be for those who serve, not for those who lord.

The Passover dispute shows that Jesus’s disciples had already come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, God’s anointed king according to their prophets. On that night, their Lord and Teacher ended their dispute by expressing his own example of service. Their Lord proclaimed, “I am among you as the one who serves” (Luke 22:27, ESV). He also wrapped himself with the towel of a servant and humbly washed their feet, explaining: “If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you” (John 13:14-15, ESV; see John 13:1-20).

See how Jesus guided his disciples to embrace a different vision of the kingdom of God. The authority of this kingdom would not be expressed like the authority of the Gentile kingdoms: such as, the powers of the Babylonian, Persian, Greek and Roman rulers. They lorded over empires, but not so with you. The Messiah’s vision of how his kingdom achieves greatness and dominion on earth is through service. Earlier before the Passover Jesus illustrated his own vision by the grain of wheat. When the seed is planted and dies it bears much fruit (John

12:23-26). Without service in death the seed remains alone and does not become great by bearing much fruit. He gave his own life in service and death to bear many fruitful seeds. He expects his disciples to follow his vision and example.

We follow God's vision for greatness in a great kingdom by adopting the mind of Christ Jesus (Philippians 2:1-10). Christians in Corinth certainly learned about the mind of Christ from the stories and teachings of Jesus. I wonder what they thought about the disciples disputing about who would be greatest in the kingdom? It's powerful that Jesus gave his own fellowship supper in remembrance of his service to humanity while they disputed for rule over humanity. The Corinthian church gathered regularly on the first day of the week to share the Lord's supper together. Surprisingly Paul rebuked them: "When you come together, it is not the Lord's supper that you eat" (I Corinthians 11:20, ESV; see 1 Corinthians 11:17-34). At the Lord's supper they forgot their table manners from their Lord's own example of service.

There are many reasons why people who share a common bond dispute and treat certain members of their group with contempt. In this case the rich disregarded the poor, eating without waiting for them and without sharing their finer food and drink in fellowship together. Practices proclaiming distinctiveness between humans may have been the custom of the culture, but the church is Christ's kingdom and Christ's culture. If Jesus were present physically, he would choose to eat with the poor and rich equally (Luke 14:7-14). Remember, Jesus is present in the Spirit and power during his supper to bless, and to discipline if needed. What we actually practice expresses our true vision, or else we are double-minded and two-faced. We who adopt the mind of Christ will practice a genuine and heartfelt sharing of Christ and our lives by becoming a servant who serves like our Lord and Teacher.

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